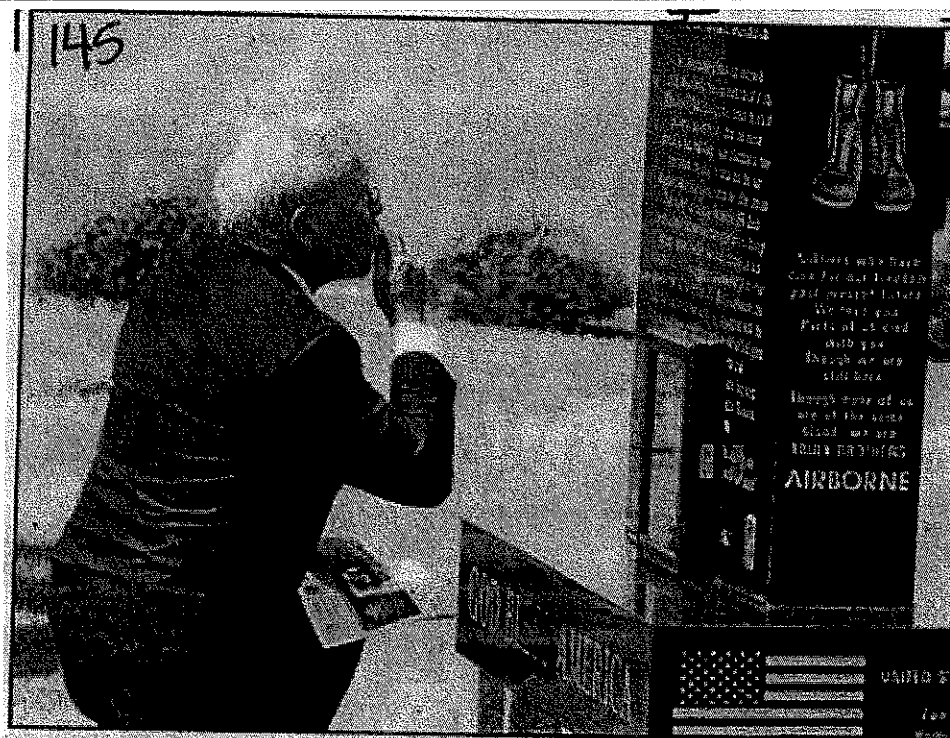


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Tim Hicks/ Managing Editor

Paul Monti crosses himself after placing his son's Medal of Honor on the monument that honors 1st Sgt Jared Monti of the 10th Mountain Division. Monti was killed in Afghanistan.

# Monument of Honor

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Barnwell County did the right thing by Jared C Monti because he did the right thing by them and the country.

And so the county honored the late First Sgt. Jared C. Monti, who died in Afghanistan in 2006 while trying to rescue a wounded soldier from his patrol who

was exposed to enemy Taliban fire. Monti was killed in his third attempt to reach the soldier. For his bravery, he was awarded the Medal of Honor, the nation's highest military award.

On April 10, a dedication ceremony for the monument honoring Monti was held at Veterans Memorial Park in Barnwell, where the monument was placed.

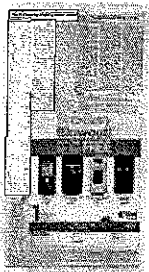
"He simply wanted to do the right thing," Paul Monti

said of his son in his remarks to the crowd of about 140 people.

The monument was part of Project Geronimo, whose aim was to honor Monti, of Massachusetts, and the 173rd Airborne. The monument was donated by an anonymous Vietnam veteran and member of the 173rd Airborne who lives in the region. Monti did not

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## Monti: Honoring Medal of Honor soldier

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serve with the 173rd Airborne.

The ceremony was attended by Paul Monti, Jared Monti's father from Raynham, Mass., as well as military officials representing the 10th Mountain Division of Fort Drum, N.Y., the 82nd Airborne and 173rd Airborne Brigades of Fayetteville, N.C., and a Fort Gordon honor guard Fort Gordon.

The program was presented by the Barnwell County chapters of the Vietnam Veterans of America and the Marine Corps League.

Monti said the best way to honor his son's memory is for all people, particularly those in Washington D.C., to do the right thing by their conscience as well as support the soldiers.

"I would implore you to go and do the right thing," he said. "We look at Washington D.C. and people who do what they are told and not what is right."

Monti said Washington politicians should vote their conscience and not along political lines.

"It stagnates the country and helps no one," he said.

Monti cited nationalities and ethnic groups that are part of the U.S. population.

"We are all Americans. We all want what is best for the country," Monti said.

After the ceremony, Monti said it would take hours to

describe his son.

"Jared was a father's dream. He did what a boy is supposed to do. He was an honors student," he said. "He was a very caring young man. He was kind and compassionate. He had many, many medals, but he didn't tell anyone. I found them in his sock drawer later. I knew if he got in a situation, he would put his life ahead of his men."

"I miss him more than I

would miss my arms and legs. He should be eulogizing me. I want to remember him as a humanitarian, not as G.I. Joe or a Rambo," Monti said.

The elder Monti was moved by the honor given to his son so far from home.

"It's quite amazing. I live in Massachusetts. We are in South Carolina," he said. "He was a United States soldier, not a Massachusetts soldier. Now he belongs to the nation," Monti said.

Jared Monti was memorialized by Medal of Honor recipient, retired Maj. Gen. James Livingston representing the National Medal of Honor Society.

Livingston received his medal for leading Marines in actions against the enemy at Dai Do in Vietnam in 1968.

"The Medal of Honor is perhaps the most recognizable honor in the military, except for the Purple

Heart," Livingston said.

The Purple Heart is awarded to personnel wounded in combat.

Livingston said there have been 3,446 Medal of Honor recipients, many getting them posthumously. Of those, 51 percent from World War II lived to receive their honor; 29 percent from the Korean conflict; 38 percent from the Vietnam conflict.

However, for the actions in Iraq and Afghanistan, "in the current conflict, no one has survived to receive the honor," he said.

Monti was one of six Medal of Honor recipients awarded since actions began in Iraq and Afghanistan, he said.

"I for one wish I had known him. Jared will always be the best part of America," Livingston said. "God bless America because God has blessed America with Jared Monti."

Monti served as a paratrooper in the 82nd Airborne and with the 10th Mountain Division. In 1999 when he was with the 82nd Airborne, Monti helped with the 173rd Airborne reunion in Fort Bragg.

While at the reunion, Monti introduced Barb Dresser, a military parent, to Jim Dresser, who would later become her husband. The Easley couple belong to the 173rd Airborne Brigade Association in Columbia.

After learning of Monti's

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death, Dresser wanted to honor her surrogate son and the 173rd Airborne. This began Project Geronimo for Barnwell County as she worked with Eddie Hair of Barnwell, who is a 173rd Airborne veteran of Vietnam.

The April 10 ceremony included remarks by U.S. Rep. Wilson, retired Col. Wolf Kutter of the 10th Mountain Division Association, Rusty Coleman of the 82nd Airborne Association of Savannah, Ga. and Hilton Head and Brig. Gen. Bryan Gamble of Fort Gordon.

Wilson said he will have a transcript of Paul Monti's comments placed in the Congressional Record, the chronicle of Congress.

Quoting Machiavelli, the 15th century political philosopher, Coleman said, "It is not titles that honor men, but men that honor titles." It's Jared who honors the Medal of Honor.

The ceremony opened with a helicopter from the Lexington County Sheriff's Office flying overhead as green smoke billowed in the landing zone. In Vietnam, soldiers used green smoke at landing zones to let their comrades know one of their own fell in battle.

Despite the honors, Monti said he would forego the medals to have his son back.

"He was my boy, my baby," Monti said. "I'd give anything to hug that boy again."